

ANNUAL REPORT  
*2013-2014*



**INTERDISTRICT SCHOOL FOR ARTS AND COMMUNICATION, ISAAC**

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## MISSION STATEMENT

ISAAC inspires excellence through the arts and project-based learning in a collaborative, multicultural community.

### ISAAC is an Expeditionary Learning School

Expeditionary Learning is a comprehensive school-wide program that promotes rigorous and engaging curriculum; active, inquiry-based instruction; and a school culture that demands and teaches compassion and good citizenship. The EL model challenges students to think critically and to take active roles in their classrooms and communities, resulting in higher achievement and greater engagement in school.

Our academic program, aligned to Connecticut Standards, is designed to cultivate a culture of high student achievement through:

**Engaging Instructional Practices:** ISAAC classrooms are alive with inquiry, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Teachers talk less. Students talk and think more. Lessons have explicit purpose guided by learning targets for which students take ownership and responsibility. In all classrooms, teachers differentiate instruction and maintain high expectations in order to bring out the best in all students and cultivate a culture of high achievement.

**Student Engaged Assessment:** ISAAC teachers, leaders, and students embrace the power of student-engaged assessment practices to build student ownership of learning, focus students on reaching standards-based learning targets, and drive achievement. Staff members engage in ongoing data analysis, examining everything from formal assessments to daily samples of student work. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, critique, rubrics, feedback and work with experts.

**Real-World Learning:** ISAAC leaders and teachers work to develop curriculum that make standards come alive for students by connecting learning to real-world issues and needs. Academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning inspire students to think and work as professionals do, contributing to high-quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom.

## THE CREW MODEL FOR SCHOOL CLIMATE

ISAAC's approach to creating a positive school climate is grounded in *Responsive Classroom* philosophy and Expeditionary Learning Core Practices such as *Establishing Structures for Knowing Students Well*. ISAAC's approach to school climate fosters safe, challenging and joyful classrooms and school. At ISAAC, our school culture is planned for, developed, and sustained through practices that bring the community together, promote shared understandings, and encourage all community members to become crew, not passengers.

The Guiding Principles of CREW are:

**Citizenship/Courage - Respect/Responsibility - Enthusiasm - Work Hard**

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# *A letter from the Principal and President of the Board*

September 19, 2014

Stefan Pryor, Commissioner  
Connecticut Department of Education

Dear Commissioner Pryor,

The Interdistrict School for Arts and Communications, ISAAC, is proud to submit to you our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Report. Since 1997, ISAAC has celebrated its uniqueness as a multi-cultural community of experiential learners. ISAAC continues to provide a unique middle school experience, integrating Visual Arts, Music and Performing Arts and high level Technology within its core curriculum. The curriculum at ISAAC is designed to be expeditionary and hands-on, with a focus on collaborative learning. Our goal is to create inquisitive and high achieving students who are ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

ISAAC remains fiscally solvent, with clean audits indicating effective management and effective internal controls. Our Board of Directors has been extremely supportive of our school improvement initiatives and is proactively engaged in applying proper policy and procedures to their governance practices.

ISAAC received School of Distinction status from the State Department of Education for school year 2012-2013 based on our students' achievement on the Connecticut Mastery Test, with ISAAC outperforming other Title I schools throughout the state. We are proud of the progress of all our students in particular our English Language Learners showed a more than a 12% gain from 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in both Mathematics and Reading proficiency.

In 2013, ISAAC continued its school improvement initiatives with Expeditionary Learning (EL). EL provides ISAAC with professional development, coaching and online tools to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture and leadership practices.. EL is also a national network of schools who have taken a lead with the implementation of Common Core State Standards.

ISAAC has strong student support structures including a co-teaching model where students with special needs are taught by highly qualified subject area and special education teachers.

We believe that our students learn best by doing and applying their learning to real-world issues. These learning experiences drive student engagement and provide our teachers and students with a wealth of resources for both inside and outside of the classroom. As such, we continue to work with strong community partners including the United States Coast Guard Research and Development Center, Dominion Power, Connecticut College, University of Connecticut, Florence Griswold Museum, and many more. Additional literacy partnerships with the Writer's Block and the Hygienic Arts, Do the Write Thing provided enriching activities in creative writing, photojournalism and self-expression via performing arts.

We have three clear priorities for next year:

1. To continue our work to build a rigorous academic program aligned with Common Core State Standards that will serve as a model in our region for top quality middle school education and will prepare our students to excel in high school and beyond.
2. To continue to develop our Extended Day Programming with a goal of serving at least 80% of our students this year and 100% by 2015-16.
3. To grow our parent engagement initiatives including parenting and family health education through our partnership with School Based Health Center, which is an initiative funded by the Community Health Center. Since 2012, ISAAC is the only charter school in Connecticut with School Based Health Services.

As a public Charter School, we are dependent upon consistent and reliable state funding in order to sustain our strong program and implement the new state initiatives before us. Your support and advocacy for equitable funding will ensure that ISAAC can continue to provide educational excellence for our diverse student population.

Together with the support of the State Department of Education, our community partners, and regional arts, cultural, educational and social service institutions, ISAAC will continue to be a vibrant place for learning for our students through the arts, a positive and supportive school climate, and project-based learning.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen Castagnaro  
President,  
Board of Directors



David C. Howes  
Principal  
*Acting Executive Director*

# ***About Our School***

## ***Recruitment and Admissions***

ISAAC mission and charter are committed to decreasing racial isolation in Southeastern Connecticut. In the 2013-2014 school year ISAAC continued to enforce a recruitment strategy designed to meet the school's targeted demographics (50% urban / 50% suburban) and increase general awareness of the school and its programs in the region. The mission of the schools recruitment campaign is to meet the provisions of the school's charter commitment.

In the 2013-2014 school year there were 242 students representing a rich ethnic and demographic diversity of families from throughout Southeastern Connecticut. The State Department of Education approved an increase of (16) additional seats starting with the 2014-2015 school year. The increase brings the overall student population to 262. The increase in enrollment, regular new incoming 6th grade students required that 116 new students be admitted.

Applications for enrollment are available starting the first week of November. ISAAC holds open house events and schedules private tours throughout the year in order to accommodate the needs of prospective families. Open houses and the admissions process is publicized by electronic e-mail, regional newspaper, recruitment fairs, Facebook and the school website.

Information about the school and invitations to families from sending towns are sent a direct mailing invitation to apply for admissions by January of each year.

The commitment to demographic diversity drives the school's recruitment initiatives, the implementation of which allows the school to successfully meet its admissions objectives. These initiatives include an intensive target marketing campaign directed to 5th grade families throughout Southeastern Connecticut. The School's recruitment focuses on nurturing collaborative relationships with sending districts, focus on online visibility and social media. These strategic initiatives enable the school to successfully meet its annual goal of 50% of students from the suburbs and 50% from New London.

## **Transportation**

Through our affiliation with the Regional Multicultural Magnet School, RMMS, located a short distance from the school, students from the City of New London, Town of Groton, Ledyard, Montville, North Stonington, Preston, Stonington and Waterford are provided with school bus transportation by their sending districts. Families are required to register directly with the transportation company servicing their traditional public school district.

**Student Information for 2014-2015 Recruitment & Admissions Data**

Online open house preregistration opens:	September 26, 2013	Application deadline:	March 12, 2014
Applications Open:	January 11, 2013	Annual Lottery:	March 19, 2014
Open house events:	November 14, 2013, January 23, 2014 February 26, 2014	Lottery results mailed:	March 26, 2014

**Applications Received**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>207</b>		<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>207</b>	
Grade	New London	Other Towns	Grade	New London	Other Towns
6	108	59	6	98	73
7	18	11	7	18	4
8	5	3	8	10	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>79</b>

**Accepted Students**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>116</b>		<b>2013-2014</b>		
Grade	New London	Other Towns	Grade	New London	Other Towns
6	55	36	6	29	45
7	13	7	7	14	3
8	4	1	8	10	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>

**Waiting List**

<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>99</b>		<b>2012-2013</b>		
Grade	New London	Other Towns	Grade	New London	Other Towns
6	66	9	6	69	28
7	15	1	7	4	1
8	5	3	8	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>29</b>



# *Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification*

## *Brief Summary of the ISAAC Academic Program*

Students and families choose ISAAC for its safe and intimate learning environment and its unique academic program where the arts and communication are integrated into all learning experiences. ISAAC's diversity is its greatest strength. ISAAC is a diverse community of students who come from 16 different towns within New London County.

However, our greatest strength also presents our greatest challenge. We are challenged to implement effective instructional strategies that will meet the needs of so many different backgrounds and varying abilities. Therefore, we employ the student-engaged practices of Expeditionary Learning in our curricular design, instruction and assessment to overcome these challenges and to reach every student at ISAAC.

1. **Research-based instructional practices:** ISAAC is an Expeditionary Learning School and our teachers and school leaders are trained to maximize student learning opportunities through the use of effective instructional practices that consider not only the concepts students must know but also the instructional strategies that will help students learn most effectively.
2. **Data-driven instruction:** ISAAC teachers and school leaders make instructional decisions that are based on student needs as determined by examination of student work and data such as regular writing prompts, MAP Testing, and CMTs. Grade level teams utilize Professional Learning Community practices to review student work and inform instruction.
3. **Project-based learning:** ISAAC teachers and school leaders work to prioritize learning standards and to develop interactive, interdisciplinary performance tasks that assess student learning. ISAAC believes students learn best by doing and these *Learning Expeditions* are a foundation of the educational experience at ISAAC.
4. **Highly Qualified Teachers:** One hundred percent of our academic teachers are highly qualified by federal standards and thus certified by the State of Connecticut to teach.

## **Learning Structures**

These structures provide students with varied learning settings that offer instruction to best meet their individual and diverse learning needs:

### **Core Classes**

Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies compose our core curriculum.

Highly qualified educators teach the core classes, as well as our Academy (elective) classes. The curriculum and teaching strategies are examined and revised regularly as determined by student data collected by the data teams.

### **Academy Classes**

Science Academy, Social Studies Academy, Creative Writing, Journalism, Theater, Spanish, ELL, Heritage Spanish, Chorus, Band, Technology, Visual Arts, Health, and Physical Education comprise our Academy course offerings.

Students are also be placed in Literacy and Math Workshop Academy classes based on need as determined by data. The focus of these Academies is skill development and targeted intervention in the areas of math and literacy.

### **Crew**

Students start every school day with their crew, a group of 10-12 students and 1 teacher. Crew meetings can include CPR (Circle of Power and Respect), study skills, and personal organization. In Crew, each student begins his or her day as part of a close-knit community where activities are introduced to help them build character, empathy, and respect. This structure serves as an academic and social advisory for each student.

### **Common Team Plans**

The daily schedule provides common meeting time every other day for the team teachers. Teachers use this common planning time to address student and academic concerns.

### **Common Subject Plans**

In addition, the schedule provides for common planning time on alternate days for teachers who share subject areas. During this time, teachers discuss student achievement, analyze assessments and continually revise and adjust curriculum to meet student needs.

### **English Language Learners Program**

To improve the literacy skills of our English language learners, a full ELL program has been implemented including both co-teaching and language support classes taught by a certified TESOL teacher.

### **Bi-Monthly Faculty Meetings**

The faculty meetings are scheduled twice per month and focus on discussion of overall school improvement, best teaching practices, analysis of student work, and reflection on how teaching and learning can be improved

### **Professional Learning Communities**

Grade level teams meet weekly to look at student work and use that data to inform instruction.

### **Monthly Committee Meetings**

Staff is encouraged to participate in building level committee work. These committees met on a monthly basis, or more often as needed. The committees included Curriculum, Data Inquiry, School Climate/PBS, School Safety, Student Support Team, Special Education Team, and Building and Facilities.

### **Monthly professional development**

Professional development training this year was focused on these primary areas:

1. **Teacher Support and Evaluation** – initial training, support and implementation of the new SEED plan.
2. **Instructional Best Practices** – Writing and literacy strategies, work-shop model approach to instruction, and unit/lesson design using the Expeditionary Learning models.
3. **School Climate** – Initial training for Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program.

### **Learning Expeditions & Adventure Education**

Each year, teachers plan integrated projects that focus on a central theme. These projects are called *Learning Expeditions*. Students explore a theme that culminates in performance assessments where students demonstrate their learning through the use of oral and written communication, math skills, the visual arts and technology. The projects were showcased at our Expedition Celebration Night in June of 2014.

ISAAC students also have the opportunity each year to participate in outdoor adventure trips. Outdoor adventures this past year included options of camping, high-ropes, white water rafting, and community service projects,

## ***Modifications***

### **ELL Programming**

In order to meet the unique learning needs of our English Language Learner, we have implemented a formal ELL program including a full-time ELL instructor and courses dedicated to improving literacy for these students.

### **Math and Literacy Academy Classes**

ISAAC continues to provide remedial instruction for our students that struggle with literacy and mathematics in our Academy classes. Identified students attend these classes in addition to their regular language arts and mathematics class.

# School Goals

## I. Educational Progress of Students

### Goal A

*All students will use reasoning with evidence in writing to master content and character targets during daily lessons.*

### Measurable Objective 1

Objective 1 – By June 2014, 100 % of ISAAC students identified as “Developing” writers on the Fall 2013 writing prompt will move to “Accomplished” or “Exemplary” by Spring 2014.

### Measurement Tools

School-wide writing prompts, administered 3x during the year to each grade level team. Prompts will be scored using rubrics that are aligned to Common Core Standards in Writing and *6+1 Traits of Writing*. All teachers were trained in the 6+1 traits.

**Benchmark** - *Please see Fall 2013 writing prompt scores below.*

GRADE	BEGINNING %			DEVELOPING %			ACCOMPLISHED %			EXEMPLARY %		
	<i>Fall 2013</i>	<i>Winter 2013-2014</i>	<i>Spring 2014</i>	<i>Fall 2013</i>	<i>Winter 2013-2014</i>	<i>Spring 2014</i>	<i>Fall 2013</i>	<i>Winter 2013-2014</i>	<i>Spring 2014</i>	<i>Fall 2013</i>	<i>Winter 2013-2014</i>	<i>Spring 2014</i>
<b>6</b> <b>(75 students total)</b>	33	18	15	27	31	27	28	35	31	12	16	28
<b>7</b> <b>(78 students total)</b>	23	12	21	23	29	17	37	51	44	16	9	19
<b>8</b> <b>(78 students total)</b>	13	9	4	50	31	35	31	51	47	6	9	14

**Progress in Meeting the Goal** - *Please see Spring 2014 writing prompt scores above.*

### Modifications in Goal Objectives:

Improvements for 2013-14 included a continued focus on our low-performing subgroups that did not meet target, specifically our Hispanic and ELL students.

### Improvements Planned for 2014-2015

Our plans for improvement this year towards our goal of writing is to:

Provide consistent and frequent professional development around writing with evidence. We commit to formally assessing student writing three times throughout year and using the data from these to inform our practices. In addition, all teachers will have a writing with evidence goal for their teacher evaluation plans for the school year. With the support of Expeditionary Learning, the school’s professional development plan for 2014-2015 has been designed to support teachers in improving this goal.

## **II. Accomplishment of Mission, Purpose and Specialized Focus**

### **Goal A**

ISAAC will fully implement Expeditionary Learning school-wide model, incorporating academic and character targets.

#### **Measurable Objective 1**

Teachers will design effective workshop model lessons that engage, support and hold students accountable for meeting academic and character targets.

#### **Measurement Tool**

2013-14 Expeditionary Learning Work-Plan (pages 14-18) and Implementation Review (pages 19-21).

#### **Benchmark**

Learning Walk data collections throughout the year. In addition we will be using Expeditionary Learning Mid-year and End-of-year Evaluations.

#### **Progress in Meeting the Goal**

The SPI Targets in Reading and Writing were met school-wide, which was our focus on our Work Plan (SEE Expeditionary Learning review pages 19-21). More work needs to be done to improve our practical use of data to better inform instruction on a more timely basis in order to increase achievement for all students.

#### **Improvements Needed**

Tools for progress monitoring need to be put in place, along with practical data collection to inform instruction. The school will be adopting MAP Testing for the next school year in provide the data needed to identify individual student needs.

**Goal: We will build a community on the pillars of growth mind-sets, appreciation of our diverse gifts and cultures, and shared commitment to inspiring passion and leadership in all ISAAC citizens.**

**Rationale:** In order to have a significant impact on student achievement, we need to build on the work we began last year to create a culture, with structures to support it, that promotes shared leadership and mutual commitment to student achievement and the ISAAC mission.

**Alignment with EL Core Practices:** Community of Learning (25A, C); Crew (27A, B); School Vision (31A, B, 38A); Positive School Culture (35A, B); Professional Learning (36D, E, 32B)

Faculty Learning Targets	Structures and Leadership Actions	EL Support and Services	Data Points/Evidence for Monitoring Progress
<p>I can actively model the ISAAC Character Values and follow our Norms in our staff work together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole faculty meetings</li> <li>• One committee</li> <li>• Turning side conversations into constructive conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define roles, responsibilities and deliverables of administrative positions and committees (Janna)</li> <li>• <b>High Functioning Leadership meeting— notetaking, roles, norm check (All)</b></li> <li>• Clearly communication the level of decision-making to Staff—ABCD (All)</li> <li>• Provide contracted time for committees to meet</li> <li>• Create structures for Committee work— Notetaking, decision-making level</li> <li>• <b>Staff Meeting that reflect the High Functioning Team Protocol</b></li> <li>• Oversee committee work---observe committees in action and provide support (Janna)</li> <li>• Create comprehensive calendar for the year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide models from EL schools</li> <li>• Effective meeting training – traditions, protocols, norms, agenda access, communication</li> <li>• Resources and supports from El</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty Handbook with ABCD decision-making document</li> <li>• Description of each committee role and responsibility</li> <li>• Mid year teacher survey that is aligned with goals on work plan (ex. question like do you know who to go to for certain decisions)</li> <li>• Leadership Team observation (determine Tracking Observation sheet)</li> <li>• Committee attendance and deliverables</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>I can practice and encourage the belief that everybody can grow and achieve more than they thought possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders model and create a safe environment for “success and failure.”</li> <li>• Provide time for</li> </ul>	<p>PD workshop on growth vs. fixed mind-sets</p> <p>14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEED Surveys—reflection tool</li> <li>• Faculty meeting routines implemented</li> </ul>

	<p>appreciations and apologies at faculty meetings</p>		
<p>I can participate in courageous conversations about diversity: class, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide diversity training and regular opportunities for discussion</li> </ul>	<p>Plan with teachers to incorporate more projects and expeditions that promote recognition of the “other.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of communications with families (newsletters, class evenings, positive notes, conferences, etc.</li> <li>• SEED survey – staff, students and parents</li> </ul>
<p>I can share best practices with colleagues, and learn from my colleagues’ best practices. Embedded in student achievement goal structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule time for faculty members to present best practices from EL Institutes and classroom vignettes, Facebook page, newsletters, community meetings</li> </ul>	<p>PD on effective meeting structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agendas, minutes, outcomes</li> <li>• Visibility of norms</li> <li>• Exit tickets/feedback from staff</li> </ul>
<p>I can actively seek opportunities for students and parents to share leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide description of role and parameters of student government</li> <li>• I-BRIC on family engagement</li> <li>• SLC pilot</li> </ul>	<p>Family engagement strategies, models from other schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board attendance at school events</li> <li>• Parent attendance</li> <li>• Student government actions</li> </ul>
<p>I can assess my progress on the above targets embedded in the student achievement goal structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide reflection time</li> <li>• Create (or choose) survey tool to assess relational trust</li> </ul>	<p>Provide examples of climate and culture surveys</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre, middle and post surveys</li> </ul>

**Goal:** All students will use reasoning with evidence in writing to master content and character targets during daily lessons.

**Student Achievement Goal**

**Rationale:**

**Alignment with EL Core Practices:** Effective Lessons (10B, 11D); Mapping Skills and Content (1A, B, C); Projects and Products 5A, B, &C); Assessment for Learning (21A-F), Using Data (34A,B, 31 C, D)

Faculty Learning Targets	Structures and Leadership Actions	EL Support and Services	Data Points/Evidence for Monitoring Progress
<p>1. I can analyze data and adjust my instruction to ensure that all students can use reasoning with evidence in writing in my content area.</p>	<p>Model how to run data team meetings and expectations</p> <p>Identify a team of teachers to create the CBASWrite Prompts aligned to CCSS and requiring students to use reasoning with evidence.</p> <p>Schedule Interim Assessments and data meetings before school starts and protect that time on the calendar.</p> <p>Identify a “point person” who manages the data cycle and collects evidence. Decide what part of MAP data /process to pilot this year.</p>	<p>Support leadership team in structuring the data cycle.</p> <p><b>Provide collection tool— Dashboard?</b></p> <p>Support ISAAC team in mapping out a 2-3 year plan for data use with multiple data sources.</p>	<p>LASW (Looking at student work as part of the data cycle and embedded in each professional learning cycles.)</p> <p>CBASWrite (CT Benchmark Assessment) Intentionally build prompts that require students to use reasoning with evidence with complex text. (Use Smarter Balanced Resources and other CCSS resources to guide this). Teams of teachers read student responses and track evidence (rubric needed) of students using reasoning with evidence.</p>
<p><b>2. Long Term:</b> I can design and implement lessons that push students to grapple.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop 2.0 (50 minutes)</li> <li>• Identifying Complex Text</li> <li>• Teaching the “Close Reading Process”</li> <li>• Math focus— problems that support student grappling (Dan Meyers resources)</li> </ul>	<p>See professional learning cycle for details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name the learning and structure of cycles</li> <li>• Put cycle dates on the calendar</li> <li>• Use year-long LT tracker (in PD room?)</li> </ul> <p>Protocols and structures for team meeting time—designate purpose for different days and deliverables. (Team logistics and instructional support balanced with Looking at Student Work—(LASW).</p> <p>Team Agenda template (with</p>	<p>Provide models of reasoning with evidence in different content areas.</p> <p>Serve as critical friend to Principal and Instructional Coach to push the efficacy of the coaching cycles.</p> <p>Instructional Coach (and possibly principal) participate in regional coaching cohort</p> <p>Support alignment of teacher evaluation system with work plan.</p>	<p>Celebration/ Teacher final products (deliverable) at the end of each cycle (sharing best practice or quality student work that came AS A RESULT of the professional learning cycle).</p> <p>Teachers collect / submit evidence that are also linked to SEED Survey</p> <p>Learning Walks based on “reasoning with evidence in action” criteria list (2 times per cycle)</p>

<p>3. <b>Long Term:</b> I can support students to monitor their progress on Learning Targets. (get to this target after teachers are more on top of data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using models, critique and DF</li> <li>• setting goals around targets</li> </ul>	<p>clear, enforced meeting norms)</p> <p>Instructional Coaching Cycle</p> <p>Align teacher evaluation system to work plan goals and faculty learning targets.</p>	<p>Deliver “New Learning” and/or facilitate LASW (looking at student work) or LATW (looking at teacher work) during PLC (professional learning cycle) time.</p>	
<p>4. <b>Long Term:</b> I can design quality products that push students to use reasoning with evidence. (curriculum design—subject planning time)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can describe what reasoning with evidence looks like in my content area.</li> <li>• Describe EL’s definition of quality</li> </ul> <p>build scaffolding into projects</p>	<p>Implement a curriculum design coaching cycle in order to strategically support project planning with a limited number of identified teachers during a cycle.</p>	<p>Facilitate baseline quality work protocol for EL Implementation Team, and work with administrative team use data to establish the curriculum coaching cycles in the building.</p> <p>Collaborate with curriculum coach to offer quality feedback to teachers during coaching cycle.</p>	<p>Quality Work Protocol—baseline, mid-year, and end-of-year</p> <p>Collect unit plan and model/exemplar product from teachers in curriculum coaching cycle that can be used as SEED evidence.</p>



*The long-term goal is to build the internal capacity of every school staff. In order to maximize your relationship with EL, we suggest that instructional leaders work alongside school designers whenever possible. Think strategically about how work with teachers or teams can impact school-wide implementation.*

**Most direct service days will be scheduled in advance and may include the following:**

- Leadership coaching
- Leadership team meetings
- Collecting and/or analyzing data related to the work plan goals
- Curricular planning sessions
- PD planning and/or facilitation
- Classroom observations/debrief sessions
- Supporting coaching cycles
- Support with National Conference preparation, Fund for Teachers applications, and other national activities
- Participation at institutes with staff members to provide targeted support
- Supporting the implementation of institute content in classrooms/schools

**EL Institutes (Include date, location, and # of participants):**

- National Conference, October 24-26, Atlanta,
- Assessment in Daily Instruction, January 9-11, Denver, 3 slots
- Leadership Cohort, February 11-12, Northeast TBD, 1 slot
- Common Core Math in EL Schools, February 27- March 1, Long Island City, 2 slots
- Using Data to Improve Student Achievement, March 27-29, Indianapolis, 3 slots
- Site Seminars, TBD, 5 slots
- EL Leadership Induction, July 21-23, Amherst, 1 slot

**Number of direct service days (as designated by MOU):**

Specific check-in dates/structures during the school year to monitor the work plan goals:

Julia (lead designer—25 days)

Jenny (7 days).

- 1 day onsite with Jules for September baseline data collection (quality work protocol with EL Implementation Team), learning walk, and checking in with admin about their work plan goal.
- 1 day onsite for midyear review
- 3 days onsite for 2014-15 work plan creation (or other big picture work TBD as needed)
- 2 days offsite—spread out into partial days to regularly collaborate with Executive Director—goal setting and progress monitoring in relation to partnership conditions for EL Implementation.

Ongoing practices included bi-weekly PLC meetings (Professional Learning Community), Every other day team meetings, bi-weekly staff meetings, every other day subject plan meetings, bi-weekly committee meetings to include data, curriculum and PBIS.

The list following is specific PD days and topics covered:

**August - 20, 21**  
New Teacher Orientation

**August - 26, 27**  
Creating culture of achievement, SEED orientation

**September 23**  
6+1 Writing traits and use of writing prompt data

**October 15**  
Workshop model

**January 17**  
Presentations by those who attended offsite PD to include Close reading strategies and writing with evidence

**February 28**  
Checking for understanding and debrief

**April 11**  
Looking at data (results from MAP testing and writing prompts)

**June 16, 17, 18**  
Crew curriculum development, end of year reflection, final data analysis

*Offsite PD throughout the year included 15 staff members at Expeditionary Learning institutes, conferences and site visits.*



## EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Dear School Staff,

The attached materials present the findings from the **Spring 2014** Expeditionary Learning (EL) Implementation Review. The Implementation Review (IR) scores for your school have meaning locally and nationally, since the scores are standardized across the network. The IR is designed to help:

1. Determine the level of implementation of EL practices in your school and all EL schools,
2. Track growth of your school's implementation practices levels over time,
3. Provide standardized scores that allow individual schools and researchers to analyze the relationships between level of implementation and other outcomes (e.g. growth in achievement, engagement, motivation, etc.), and
4. Inform the work plan and professional development activities for your school and EL schools nationally.

While the official scores for your school are reflected in the School Designer score, school staff scores are analyzed as they provide a valuable and critical contribution to the validation of the instrument (so that there is independent confirmation that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure).

The IR score is meant to be an accurate measure of the actual extent of implementation of 26 key EL practices in your school, called the EL *Power Practices*. The Power Practices are essential components of the EL model that are hypothesized to have an impact on student achievement either directly or indirectly. By establishing Power Practices, EL is not saying that anything in our Core Practices is unimportant; rather, we are attempting to prioritize those aspects of our design that we believe are most correlated with increased achievement.

Accompanying this letter are the following documents:

- Table of Scores – A numerical report showing Implementation Review scores for each power practice
- Chart of Scores – A bar chart showing Implementation Review scores for each power practice
- IR Progress Report – A visual report that indicates your school's overall raw score on a scale of targeted outcomes for schools by length of partnership
- An electronic copy of the Implementation Review Instrument

An important step in benefiting from these materials is to review each report carefully. The Individual School Chart provides a graphical view of the score report. The scores for each Power Practice correspond to the individual rubric in the IR Instrument, which is provided for your reference. Column 5 describes the exemplary implementation of that Power Practice, and School Designers and school leadership teams should use this column to identify specific targets for work plan goals and objectives. For Power Practices that a school is not implementing at an exemplary level, the IR instrument and Core Practices can be used as tools to establish explicit goals for improvement.

The Progress Report provides an additional way of viewing your school's overall progress towards implementation of the EL design and IR target score. The EL staff has identified IR score targets for each year of partnership, beginning with year 1 and ending with year 4 or higher. This report displays a graphic that shows your school's score in relation to its target score and last year's IR score (if applicable).

As you deepen your understanding of the Implementation Review instrument, we believe that you will gain new insight into the power of this instrument as it relates to achieving your school's goals and documentation of progress along the way. We appreciate your partnership and look forward to working with you on your annual work plan.

Respectfully,

The EL Implementation Review Research Team



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

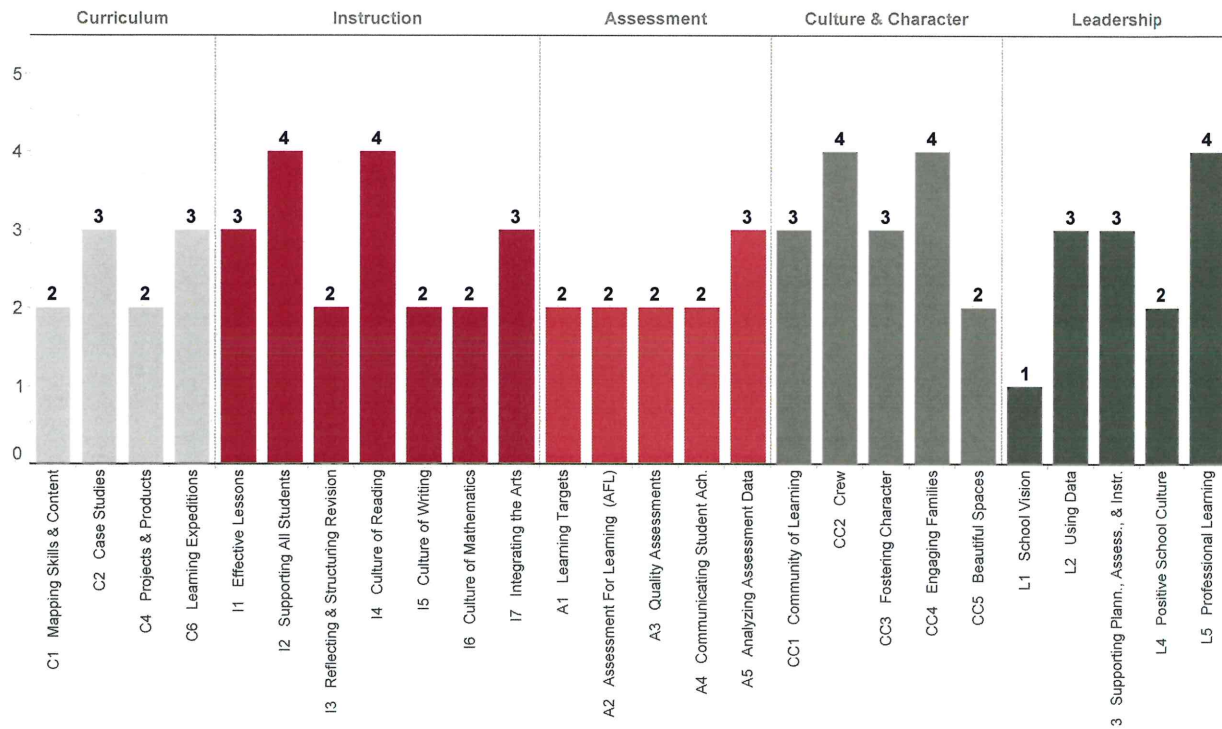
## Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC) 2014 Implementation Review Scores

Dimension	Practice	Score
Curriculum	1 Mapping Skills & Content	2
	2 Case Studies	3
	4 Projects & Products	2
	6 Learning Expeditions	3
Instruction	1 Effective Lessons	3
	2 Supporting All Students	4
	3 Reflecting & Structuring Revision	2
	4 Culture of Reading	4
	5 Culture of Writing	2
	6 Culture of Mathematics	2
	7 Integrating the Arts	3
Assessment	1 Learning Targets	2
	2 Assessment For Learning (AFL)	2
	3 Quality Assessments	2
	4 Communicating Student Achievement	2
	5 Analyzing Assessment Data	3
Culture & Character	1 Learning Community	3
	2 Crew	4
	3 Fostering Character	3
	4 Engaging Families	4
	5 Beautiful Spaces	2
Leadership	1 School Vision	1
	2 Using Data	3
	3 Supporting Planning, Assessment, & Instruction	3
	4 Positive School Culture	2
	5 Professional Learning	4

TOTAL SCORE: **70**



### Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication 2014 Implementation Review Scores



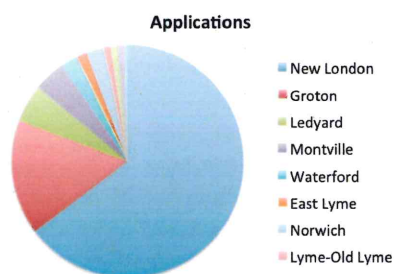
### III. Efforts to Reduce Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation and to Increase the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Student Body

#### Goal A

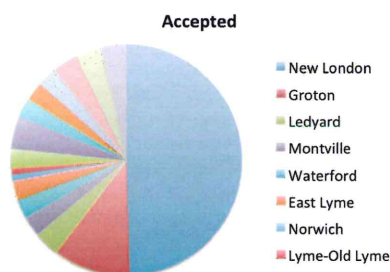
##### Measurable Objective

Through its charter, ISAAC is designed to meet the highest standards of racial and economic integration. The commitment to demographic diversity drives the school’s recruitment initiatives. As result of these efforts school is renowned for meeting some of the highest desegregation standards in the State of Connecticut (Connecticut Voices for Children, April 2014 Report). The school’s annual goal is to enroll 50% of students from the City of New London and 50% from surrounding suburban communities. In the 2013-2014 school year, 72% of the students were minorities and 65% were eligible for the federally funded free and reduced lunch program and the student body represented (9) surrounding communities.

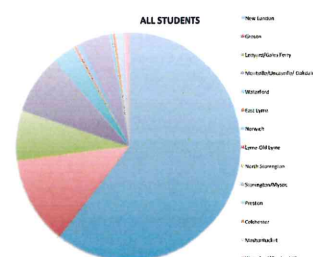
**Applications Received Chart**



**Accepted Students**



**Enrollment Chart**



##### Measurement Tool

The school maintains accurate data of applications received by year, town and by grade.

##### Benchmark

Applicant and enrollment data from each sending district indicating targeted number of students applying and enrolling from New London as well as our suburban sending districts.

##### Progress in Meeting the Goal

The commitment to demographic diversity drives the school’s recruitment initiatives, the implementation of which allows the school to successfully meet its admissions objectives. These initiatives include an intensive target marketing campaign directed to 5th grade families throughout Southeastern Connecticut. The School’s recruitment focuses on nurturing collaborative relationships with sending districts, focus on online visibility and social media. These strategic initiatives enable the school to successfully meet its annual goal of 50% of students from the suburbs and 50% from New London.

##### Modification Objectives

The school will maintain its current successful recruitment initiatives and applicant processing in place as these have proved to be the most effective since the school’s founding. However, we will be analyze the enrollment process and look at ways to maintain targeted ratios.

# *Financial Information for 2014-15 Fiscal Year*

## **Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication Budget FY 14-15**

<b>Income</b>	
Total Contributions	30,000
Grants - Titles (State & Federal)	61,309
Interest income	5,000
Total Misc. Revenue	8,000
Per Pupil Allocation	2,882,000
Special Education	602,726
Loan Proceeds	300,000
Prior Year Carryover	3,202
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>3,892,237</u></b>
<b>Expense</b>	
<b>Wages</b>	
Total Administration	334,654
Total Salary - Certified Teachers	1,404,597
Total Salary - Support Staff	182,340
Total Other Wages/Salaries	334,206
<b>Total Wages</b>	<b><u>2,255,797</u></b>
Total Benefits	407,178
<b>Total Wages and Benefits</b>	<b><u>2,662,975</u></b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>731,512</b>
Properly/Site Development	
Utilities	93,200
Maintenance and Repairs	14,000
Other Expenses	27,800
Bldg. Maintenance Contracts (Other)	10,000
Property Taxes	19,000
<b>Total Properly/Site Development</b>	<b><u>164,000</u></b>
<b>Total Debt Service</b>	<b>33,750</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b><u>3,592,237</u></b>
<b>Total Building Modifications</b>	<b>300,000</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>3,892,237</u></b>

## *Best Practices*

At ISAAC, character building and team building are key components to our curriculum. Students start every school day with their Crew, an advisory group of about 10 students and 1 or 2 teachers. Crew meetings can include CPR (Circle of Power and Respect), study skills and personal organization, character development and DIRT (Daily Independent Reading Time). In Crew, each student begins his or her day as part of a close-knit community where activities are introduced to help them build character, empathy, and respect. Our Crew teachers also work with our students on their post-high school success plans and help students monitor their academic progress.

An emphasis on project-based work is another best practice at ISAAC. Authentic student work is the result of either independent efforts or group collaborations. These Learning Expeditions focus on critical thinking and problem solving with scenarios that affect our local community and environment. Examples of some of our Learning Expeditions include the Ocean Beach Expedition and The Thames River Valley Expedition. We annually showcase these on the school's annual Expedition Night held each spring.

Our strong Visual Arts program has been one of the key components to the success of our Learning Expeditions. We practice arts integration in our core subject areas to help facilitate our student projects. With this approach, our students produce high-quality work that is content-based, meets standards and is recognized in the community. We offer both regular and Advanced Academy Visual Arts Classes. Every ISAAC student takes at least one trimester of visual arts a year.

Another regular practice at ISAAC is the integration of technology in classroom instruction. Students use technology as a tool to accelerate their work with projects. Students are taught to actively make critical choices about how to generate, obtain, manipulate, or display information. Technology is used as a tool to support students in performing authentic tasks.

A major component of ISAAC's commitment to continuous improvement is the administration's priority in scheduling to provide both Team and subject area meetings on a weekly basis. Student concerns and achievement data are the central issue in these meetings as well as planning intervention programs for individuals and groups of students with similar needs. Also by creating this structure in the schedule, it allows parent meetings during the year in which all of the student's subject area teachers can attend.

Frequent classroom visits are part of our informal teacher supervision and support, and both the Principal and Instructional Coach spend time each day in classrooms collecting data, modeling good instructional practices, and supporting teaching and learning in the classroom. We adopted the SEED plan for our teacher evaluation plan this year and created a Professional Development and Evaluation Committee to revise the plan for the next school year. Our teachers choose goals in line with our school work plan as well as goals for personal growth and development. These commitments to common approaches of school-wide improvement speaks well of the staff and its dedication to working together to improve the school.

# *Governance*

## **2013-2014 Governing Board Meetings & Summary of Major Policy Decisions**

### **Tuesday, August 27, 2013**

- Review of the open meeting law and public comment procedures adoption of procedures.
- 2013-2014 Board Committee Chairs approved.
- School renovation loan reduction from \$1.5 to \$287,517
- Technology RFP submission approved.

### **Tuesday, September 24, 2013**

- 2013-2014 Board committee goals approved.
- Budget revision approved.

### **Tuesday, October 29, 2013**

- Strategic task force recommendation to engage in school expansion dialogue and consider availability of new facilities downtown.
- School management preliminary proposal presentation

### **Tuesday, November 26, 2013**

- Strategic committee assigns consideration of high school planning to special school committee.

### **Tuesday, January 28, 2014**

- School management proposal follow/up presentation
- Request to solidify strategic planning process
- Board Ad-hoc committee created to address NLPS affiliation.

### **Tuesday, February 25, 2014**

- 2014 Board meeting calendar approved.
- Review of executive director goals

### **Tuesday, March 25, 2014**

- Executive Director (CEO Evaluation) process update
- Approval of Teacher Board Director nomination process.

### **Wednesday, April 30, 2014**

- Modification of SEED teacher evaluation process approved.
- Summer 2014 renovation approved.

### **Wednesday, May 28, 2014**

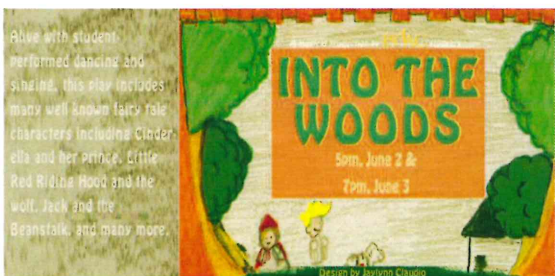
- David C. Howes accepted the position of school principal effective July 1, 2014
- \$283k building grant awarded
- Parent satisfaction survey shared with Board



## Summary of Other Key Accomplishments

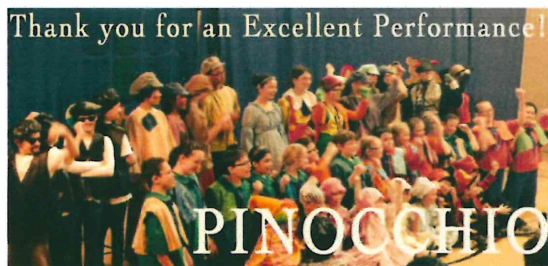


ISAAC Student Government leaders for their participated in the MIDDLE SCHOOL LEADERS forum in Hartford included a facilitated discussion led by NBC Anchor Rosalind Wiseman!



A Special Musical Production by ISAAC Students: 5:00 PM, Monday, June 2 & 7:00 PM, Tuesday, June 3; Directed by Keith Vitali - Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim - Book by James Lapine

ISAAC 8<sup>th</sup> grade students tackled this ambitious project and put on a memorable performance. Students were hands on with all aspects of this production including marketing, set design, lighting, stage management and performance. What a triumph!



PINOCCHIO - ISAAC Performing Arts Space  
2014 Missoula Children's Theatre's Annual ISAAC theatrical presentation as part of ISAAC's community project. Students k-8 from throughout Southeastern Connecticut performed on the ISAAC Performing Arts Stage on February 1, 2014.



NOAH CLACK, 2013-2014 ISAAC OUTSTANDING STUDENT OF YEAR

ISAAC's student of the year, NOAH CLACK, was honored in a special luncheon sponsored by the Rotary Club of New London. A scholar and President of Student Government, Noah Clack also participated in the school's first basketball team this year. We are also proud to announce that Noah Clack was accepted into the prestigious national scholar's program, A Better Chance, for which ISAAC is a feeder school, and as such has been accepted into Williston Northampton School, a private college-preparatory boarding school (high school) program with a full scholarship.



The After School program provides a variety of enrichment, fitness and leadership development activities for ISAAC students through a variety of clubs. These include but are not limited to Hygienic Art Do the Write Thing project, Active Minds Active Bodies, Legos Robotics Club (session 1) Outdoor Wilderness Leadership Scholars and Boys and Girls basketball (session 2).



Early Birds is a before-school exercise program run by ISAAC staff. The Early Birds Fitness Club centers on running as the primary method of fitness. It aims to teach the three simple rules. 1) Prepare for exercise: eat healthy, warm up, stretch your muscles and take care of your body. 2) Build your fitness level: elevate your heart rate for at least 20 minutes during each workout and always strive to beat your personal best. 3) Have fun!.



It was a year of great accomplishments in our music department under the baton of our new director of performing arts Mr. Keith Vitali. The growth of students over the course of the year was extraordinary. Particular highlights included a tour de force performance by the concert band at the end of the year. The three choruses and swing choir (6th, 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> grades) each displayed elements of harmony and nuance during the final concert. Performances will continue to expand in 2014-2015 with the addition of the ISAAC Jazz Band and acapella group, The Eighth Notes.



ISAAC is an experiential learning community where technology provides a driving force in creating new environments for teaching and learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and Common Core State Standards. The school has built a rich technology program over the past seven years through budget allocations and one-time infusions through grants. ISAAC students use laptops and iPads, on a daily basis and receive technology instructions in technology courses and in every core and special area class. In 2013-2014, the school was awarded a \$94,378 grant as part of the SDE's Technology Investments to Implement Common Core Standards and Administer Common Core Aligned Assessments, Specifically Smarter Balance Assessments.

The technology grant award provided the school with two new computer carts and an additional cart for IPADs; upgraded our wireless infrastructure with the goal of a seamless testing experience with Smarter Balance and MAP Assessments. These were major upgrades to both infrastructure and devices with a goal to be able to have high-speed services, latest computer technology and enough units to be able to continue with classroom integration projects while conducting testing at the same time.

# Attachments

[www.theday.com](http://www.theday.com) or [www.zip06.com](http://www.zip06.com).

Article published Nov 26, 2013

## Coast Guard Research and Development Center honors staff member

New London — The U.S. Coast Guard Research and Development Center honored one of its staff members and the executive director of the Interdistrict School for Arts And Communication for their participation in the Coast Guard Partnership in Education Program on Tuesday, Nov. 26.

Capt. Alan Arsenault, the center's commanding officer, presented the Commandant's 2013 Sustained



Excellence in Partnership in Education Award to Scot T. Tripp, to recognize his commitment to developing students' appreciation for math and science. Tripp coordinated the center's volunteer support at the middle school and developed presentations and experiments to support the curriculum.

Gina Fafard, the school's executive director, was recognized for her support of the program with a plaque. Arsenault told her the program is a "team approach" and "we sincerely appreciate your participation in this."

"Thank you very much, we appreciate you," she replied. Members of the unit typically visit area schools at least once a week to share their expertise and connect with the community, Arsenault said.

"The Coast Guard is part of the community. At the same time, we want to share the knowledge of our staff here, especially when you are talking about STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs," he said after the

presentation. "That is what we really try to focus on because that is what our true background is here."

***"The United States Coast Guard extends appreciation to the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication for its commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for students through the Coast Guard Partnership in Education Program"***

## ISAAC charter school's scores on CMT tests win recognition

By Colin A. Young

Publication: The Day

Published December 11, 2013 4:00AM

**New London** - The Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), the free public charter school downtown, was deemed a school of distinction by the State Board of Education based on progress the school's students showed on the Connecticut Mastery Test.



ISAAC, which served 185 students in grades six through eight during last year's CMT testing, scored 70 on the state's School Performance Index (SPI), just shy of its state-established target of 70.9. The results were released last week in the state's 2013 School and District Performance Reports.

"We are very excited that we received the designation as a school of distinction," Executive Director Eugenia Fafard said. "This is really about the teachers, because they are doing the heavy lifting in terms of working with students, and they are all willing to go above and beyond to help our students achieve."

A school's SPI can range from zero to 100 and is based on student performance in all subjects covered in the CMT and, if applicable, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

The purpose of the rating system is to help the state and school districts identify schools that need more support.

The charter school was recognized as a school of distinction, in part because its SPI score increased by more than 3 points from 2012 to 2013 and was among the top 10 percent of improved Title I schools, or schools that receive federal funding to meet the needs of low-income or educationally at-risk students, according to the state.

"The growth rate seen in students is a really strong signal of the hard work the folks at ISAAC are doing," said Kyle L. Rosenkrans, vice president of policy and advocacy for the Northeast Charter Schools Network, which advocates for charter schools in Connecticut and New York.

ISAAC was also credited with having less than 10 point differences between the full-school SPI and the SPI for a majority of historically underperforming subgroups, including those eligible for free or reduced lunch, and African-American and Hispanic students.

The state's ultimate target for SPI is 88, because "in a school with a SPI of 88 or above, students will have performed at or above the 'goal' level on the majority of tests," according to the report. About 56 percent of the 820 schools listed in the state's report are below that ultimate goal.

Statewide, 81 percent of charter schools scored higher than their host districts, according to analysis by NECSN, which advocates for the 18 Connecticut charter schools and nearly 200 more in New York.

"These results show that the tireless efforts of our teachers and families are paying off. On average, the state's charters are outperforming the district schools in their neighborhoods - even with the most at-risk students," said Jeremiah Grace, Connecticut state director of the Northeast Charter Schools Network, in a statement.

In New London, ISAAC scored 8.6 points higher than the city's school district, though the city's system surpassed its state-set goals while ISAAC did not.

"So many charter schools often get labeled as using narrow curricula and eliminating arts education from the program, but ISAAC stands right in the face of that wrong stereotype," Rosenkrans said. "They are doing that type of innovative programming and they're doing it well."

ISAAC FEATURED IN THE JUNE 2014 EDITION OF INK MAGAZINE  
[http://online.inkct.com/ink\\_issues/june2014issue/index.html](http://online.inkct.com/ink_issues/june2014issue/index.html)



ISAAC School -  
 On Matters of the Art  
 By Nancy LaMac-Rodgers  
 Photos by A. Vincent Sciano

One of the tragedies of public school budgeting is that when the money gets scarce, so do the arts programs. Countless efforts are made to "save the arts," and unfortunately in many struggling districts, the arts are the first to be sacrificed. The casualty rate is growing in this country, and unfortunately, the school communities that could benefit the most from these inspiring programs are the ones who lose out. Many inner-city districts will keep the sports programs no matter what, but when it comes to the arts, some districts are forced to make a choice: and the arts, generally don't fare on the side of fortune. Unfortunately for those kids who don't play sports, the arts, whether music, visual, dance, or theater, may be their only connection to school and the only reason they want to show up everyday.

Today more and more districts, especially urban ones, are looking to incorporate Magnet



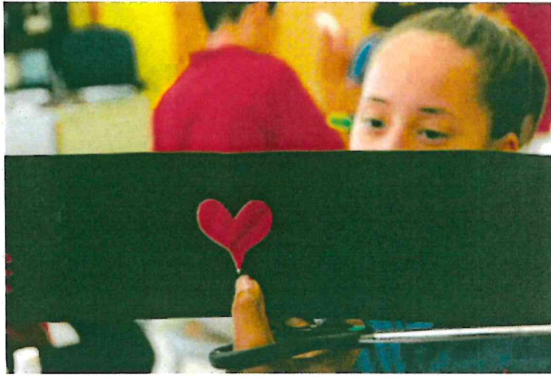
schools, which pull students from other towns and suburbs, helping to balance out the playing field and increase funding. However these Magnet schools are part of the local school district and must adhere to the policies of the district's administration.

Charter Schools, on the other hand, are a different mind set. These schools are allowed innovative freedom due partially to their private funding and their mission to foster an even deeper community and family involvement. Most Charter schools are founded by either a trusted individual or a persistent group of families and community members. While these schools are held to the same accountability on state standardized

testing, the ways and means by which to reach that goal is varied and unobstructed. Charter schools are given more leeway to get kids thinking critically and creatively, thereby, keeping the imagination alive and thriving. Not only do students meet the state requirements, there are a higher percentage of students that score at "goal and advanced levels." More importantly, their education programs them for a lifetime of learning, not just a limited, tunnel-vision view of passing a standardized test.

Far New London, the only charter school in the area is ISAAC, which stands for Interdisciplinary School for Arts and Communication. Started back in the mid 90s, ISAAC was the passion of Ruth Cole-Chu and a group of like minded





parents, educators, and community people. Initially Isaac began in the Shiloh Baptist Church with approximately forty students. Rose Clark, a Language Arts teacher at ISAAC, remembers the early days at the church. "I came in about halfway through the year, and we had about forty kids in the sixth grade. Within the year the school had grown to include 7th and 8th grade students. Gina Fafard, who is the current Executive Director of ISAAC, adds "It's interesting in that it was started with parents whose children started out in the Regional Multi-cultural Magnet School here in New London, and these parents were looking for a transition to a middle school that would be a similar experience to what their children were getting from the elementary magnet school experience.

All Charter Schools have their own "charters," and Fafard points out that the original Charter for ISAAC includes even more art-based programs than could have been hoped for. "It's interesting, because I was just reviewing the original charter the other day and realized that there are so many things built

in that include some really rich arts-based ideas that we can develop. Luckily we have the freedom to do so as well as the responsibility to do just that."

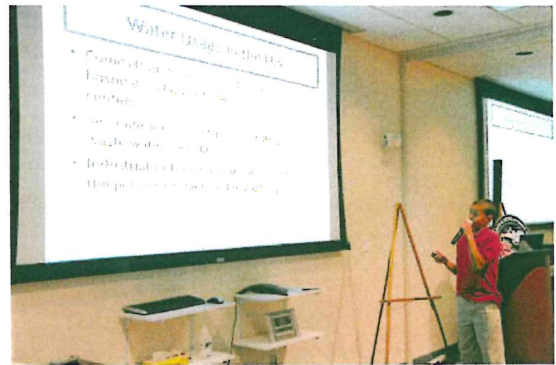
One of the beauties of ISAAC within the New London community is that not only is it



an alternative choice for middle school students. Its location in the heart of downtown makes it a natural part of the milieu. Its access to art-based entities such as the Garde Arts Theater and Hygienic Arts Cooperative allows students to

explore these rich opportunities within walking distance from their classrooms.

Experiential learning as well as something called Expeditionary learning is at the heart of what ISAAC students are afforded, and being in the heart of downtown makes this type of learning even that more accessible. Fafard is adamant about the importance of community and how essential community based learning is when providing an enriched education for students. For example, The Garde Arts Theater provides live performances which may include the ballet, a dramatic play, or the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. Additionally ISAAC collaborates with the Hygienic Arts Cooperative, a non-profit organization in downtown New London. Fafard enthusiastically points out that "we have the benefit of being the only school located in the downtown historic district of New London. This location offers us access and opportunities that get our students out of their chairs and into the real world. Our students can walk to the library, complete scientific experiments down at



the waterfront, enjoy live performances at the Garde, attend exhibits at The Hygienic, and visit area parks and historical sites."

Miguelina Salas is ISAAC's Director of Development and Community Relations. Salas became involved with ISAAC back in 2004 when founder Ruth Cobi-Chu approached her. "Ruth initially invited me to be on the board because of my professional background in the arts. It was at a time when I wanted to switch careers and use my leadership experiences in the non-profit sector. I was intrigued with the notion of a start up school with such a diverse population." Salas is passionate about the arts in education. With degrees in both art history and cultural anthropology, she understands the enormous impact the arts have on a student's education and believes the "benefits are collateral." Salas understands that a curriculum that weaves subjects together is going to give young minds the ability to consider other possibilities as well as teach critical thinking on

a higher level. "Art informs science and math as much as science and math inform art. If one wishes to understand Einstein, look at a cubist painting," Salas explains.



ISAAC recently underwent some incredible renovations to the building. Rooms were added as science labs to increase the "real life" science experience for students. "We have been extremely fortunate," says Fafard, "thanks to the collaborative

effort with Pérez, Dominion, and the Coast Guard. Our students have been afforded not only the equipment, but the experience of actually performing experiments and seeing how developments in science change lives."

Fafard, who came on as Executive Director in 2011, speaks about her own experience with the arts in education. "When I was in high school I was afforded the opportunity to attend the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven. I would take my academic classes in the morning and then hop a bus and have intensive art instruction from twelve to four. What that meant for me as a creative young person, was that it kept me in school. It kept me interested, it kept me motivated. There aren't many avenues or opportunities for kids today that are of a creative bent."

Community collaboration and involvement is at the core of ISAAC's mission and one of the

## Report: Segregation levels differ at magnet, charter schools

By [Johanna Somers](#)

Published 04/09/2014 12:00 AM

Updated 04/09/2014 12:36 AM

### New London's 'school choice programs' meeting diversity goals

**Hartford** — A Connecticut advocacy organization found that the majority of interdistrict magnet schools are racially integrated while the majority of charter schools are highly segregated, even though both types of schools are required by state law to reduce racial and ethnic segregation.

Connecticut Voices for Children released a report Wednesday morning that examined whether Connecticut's "school choice programs" are meeting the state's goals of providing every child an equal educational opportunity. Jeremiah Grace, Connecticut state director of the Northeast Charter Schools Network, said in a news release that the report was "puzzling" because charter schools are bringing educational opportunity to every child and are working to close the achievement gap.

"I think our schools are offering the opportunity, and it's up to folks to apply or not," Grace said.

Some of the charter schools have neighborhood preferences. A charter school in Hartford that has a neighborhood preference for the north end of Hartford will reflect the population in that neighborhood, he said.

Proponents of the report said the state should create clear, quantifiable and enforceable integration standards, with funding, for all school choice programs including charter schools. They said that state law requires magnet schools to meet more stringent racial integration requirements than charter schools and that the state provides additional grants to magnet schools to support integration.

However, in New London, which is headed toward an all-magnet school district, the existing charter and magnet schools are each reaching diversity goals. Other schools in southeastern Connecticut also stood out as successes, according to the report.

New London's Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC) and Norwich's Integrated Day Charter School were two of only three charter schools across the state that were meeting the highest desegregation standards, said Robert Cotto, co-author of the report. The third school was the Odyssey Community School in Manchester. New London's Regional Multicultural Magnet School and Waterford's Dual Language Arts Academy were also two of four charter, magnet and technical schools to do a "good job" of enrolling English language learners. Statewide, emerging bilingual students were underrepresented in the majority of all charter, magnet and technical schools compared to local public schools of the towns in which they were located, the report said.

"They (ISAAC) are making an effort to be a diverse school," Cotto said. "And that is commendable."

Migdalia Salas, director of development and community relations for ISAAC, said that when they applied to be a charter school they specifically included a requirement that 50 percent of students be from New London, the host community, and 50 percent come from the surrounding communities.

"We really recruit and only accept a certain number of students from each town that, in itself, creates that mix," Salas said. "But we don't do it by 'you can only allow this person; we don't do it by race; we don't focus on that.'"

According to the 2011-12 report, 73 percent of ISAAC's student body were minority students whereas 83 percent of New London's traditional public schools' student body were minority students.

According to state law, magnet schools that began operating on or after July 1, 2005, can't have more than 75 percent of its students be from a single participating district. Magnet schools' enrollment must also be at least 25 percent minority students but no more than 75 percent minority students.

Connecticut Voices for Children found that 62 percent of interdistrict magnet schools had a student body of 25 percent to 75 percent students of color.

Steven Adamowski, special master for the New London School District, said he wasn't surprised that New London's charter and interdistrict magnet schools were doing well because of the state law regarding magnet schools and the specific regulations that ISAAC had designed for itself.

The report deserves consideration, he said, because Connecticut is very segregated.

"One of the reasons why our achievement gap is so big in Connecticut is we are slicing and dicing too finely," Adamowski said. "We need to provide our students opportunities with students other than themselves, than their immediate neighborhood and circumstance."

On July 9, 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court sided with the plaintiffs in *Sheff v. O'Neill* and decided that students in Hartford's public schools were racially, ethnically and economically isolated and therefore were not provided an equal education opportunity under the state constitution.

In response, the state enacted legislation that allowed local or regional boards of education to offer school choice options such as interdistrict magnet school programs and charter schools.

But each charter school sets up its own way of monitoring and evaluating whether it is implementing state law that requires charter schools to "promote a diverse student body." Charter schools can also be placed on probation if they don't "achieve measurable progress in reducing racial, ethnic, or economic isolation," according to state law.

"This goal is not clear and evenly enforced across the state," Cotto said.

Connecticut Voices for Children found that at 65 percent of charter schools 90 percent of the students were minority.

Grace, the Northeast Charter Schools Network director, said that in districts where there are limited spaces at top schools parents should seize the opportunity when a new charter school opens, despite criticism about diversity.

"We are attempting to provide our students with a world-class education and they deserve that," Grace said.

Paul Carolan, director of the Regional Multicultural Magnet School in New London, said that if the charter schools aren't turning out to be diverse there should be state standards to enforce integration.

"One of the main reasons for magnet and charter (schools) is to have a better diversity, a more open door," he said. If the data is showing that 90 percent of one group is the majority at a particular school, then those needs are not being met, Carolan said.

Kelly Donnelly, spokeswoman for the state Department of Education, said that the state has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to improve schools to ensure that all children have access to a high-quality education.

"Public schools of choice have created high-quality options for thousands of Connecticut families," she said. "These choices can and do take multiple forms. Such schools are part of the solution - and are just one part of our larger, comprehensive education reform efforts."